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ABSTRACT

If pedagogical skills and knowledge are to become relevant to preservice teachers, students must develop their own process of active thought and become involved in their own learning. The question of how to bridge the gap between teaching theory and application can be facilitated by using a case study approach. This methodology is useful for the following reasons: (1) it bridges the gap between theory and practice; (2) it enables students to analyze problems and develop solutions for situations which will be encountered in the real world of teaching; (3) it aids students in recognizing that problems have more than one solution; and (4) it helps students to evaluate the feasibility of alternatives and to understand the ramifications of a particular course of action. The instuctor's role in the case study approach is to act as facilitator by asking questions, listening, and responding to students' answers. Methodological issues for teacher educators to consider are: how to introduce the case study approach; how to use the case study approach; appropriate physical settings; whether one is to call on students to answer the questions or whether one is going to ask for volunteers; the amount of time to be spent on specific aspects of the case; and indicators of success. Appendices provide a sample case along with an accompanying question outline. (LL)

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The Case Study Approach for Pedagogists

Paper Presented at the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance

by

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The Case Study Approach for Pedagogists

For those of us who have taught physical education pedagogy classes for many years, perhaps for more years than we care to count or recall; we are constantly reminded of this very important fact: Students who listen to our wise statements and sage advice (i.e., theory and application) know that they do not always internalize the information and in many situations cannot, will not or do not apply the information. We have learned that telling does not appear to be the best way to teach; there has to be a better way to do things!

It has been suggested that teachers view their role as one where the temptation is to tell all that they know. Teachers go to great lengths to save students from trial by fire. The rationale for this approach seems to be one of saving time and effort for the student. The question is one of whether or not this technique has been helpful to our future teachers? Do students profit from hearing correct solutions or how theory is applicable or do they profit from their own involvement in the learning environment?

We cannot effectively use the insight and knowledge of others. If pedagogical skills and knowledge are to become relevant to pre-service teachers, students must develop their own process of active thought, they must become involved in their own learning. Viewing instruction from this

perspective, instruction changes from a time of absorption to one of involvement and analysis.

The question of how to bridge the gap between teaching -- theory and application -- and having students personally make sense of what is taught is best facilitated by using case studies. Case study methodology initiates students into independent thought, responsible judgement and critical thinking. Students are encouraged to generate their own analysis, to develop their own solutions, to apply their own knowledge of theory and to assume an active rather than passive role (Silverman, Welty & Lyon, 1992a). As a side benefit, students learn to critically evaluate the contributions of their peers and to effectively participate in group activities.

There are many advantages for using the case study methodology. Some of these include: 1) the case study method provides a method of bridging the gap between theory and application; 2) the case study method enables students to analyze problems and develop solutions for situation which will be encountered in the "real world" of teaching; 3) the case study method aids students in recognizing that problems have more than one alternatives; and, 4) the case study method enables students to evaluate alternatives in terms of whether or not the alternatives are feasible, have theoretical implications and what ramifications are there

from selecting a particular course of action.

A case study is defined as a problem-centered story which focuses on real teaching dilemmas experienced in schools. Case study material may be captured from direct observation, teacher self-report or any combination of the two. Cases may be written which involve single or multiple problems, some of which may be more obvious than others but the key to a case is that it must end in a dilemma.

In the writing of the case, it is important to make sure the narrative captures both the emotional and physical environment. The narratives need to be expressed in great detail so that the reader feels he/she is apart of what is occurring or what has happened. Usually cases are two to six pages in length.

How to Teach a Case

When introducing the case study approach, inform your students that the is based upon an actual experience. Their task is to discuss all of the issues involved in the case and determine what is the best way to handle the situation. After passing out copies of the case (see Appendix A for example of a case [Boyce, 1992]) to the students and giving them approximately 10-13 minutes to read the case, it is important to inform your students that: 1) there are no right or wrong answers; 2) every person's opinion is valued; and 3) in determining how best to handle the situation, they

need to consider all of the dynamics involved; and 4) needs to assess each solution generated in terms of current theory, feasibility and ramifications.

To assist in the facilitation of the discussion on the case, it is often helpful if the instructor prepares an outline of questions and subquestions which cover the main points in the case (see Appendix B). These thought-provoking questions can not only assist the students in thinking through the problem analysis but also to help organize the students' discussion (e.g., where should the discussion start) and assist in the evaluation of alternative solutions. For example, "Should a physical education teacher be instructing from a seated position?", "Why was is important to note that Ms. Allen was a first year teacher?", "What would be an appropriate punishment for Tom and Jerry?"

How to Use the Case Study Approach

Physical Setting

The ideal room for a case discussion would be similar to a conference room (e.g., a u-shaped table surrounded with swivel chairs and chalk boards). Unfortunately, most classroom settings (e.g., square or rectangular classroom with tablet-arm chairs set in rows) are better suited for lectures. "If you are confronted with the typical physical environment and cannot be assigned a classroom with tables, it's worth the time to come early and move the desks so that

at least the u-shaped model is achieved. If you get assigned a classroom with fixed seating, make every effort to get the room changed" (Silverman, Welty, Lyon, 1992b, 5). If not, the effectiveness of the case study methodology will be quite limited due to the physical restraints of the environment. One way in which the instructor can help to facilitate discussion is to make sure that students know one another in the class (e.g., use name cards). Again, the environment which is most conducive to discussion will help to ensure the success of the case study method.

Chalk Board

The chalk boards are also an important element within the physical setting because they will allow the instructor to help organize the discussion especially when the students seem to be getting off track. The instructor can use the chalk board to help to organize the students' discussion of the case (e.g., key concepts), or "the board could demonstrate how a variety of comments recorded early in the discussion in different places on the board come together as the discussion progresses" (Silverman, Welty, Lyon, 1992b, 4). For example, if one of the students identifies "poor communication" as one of the problems then the instructor should write lack of communication (or poor communication) on the board and encourage the students to pursue this point by asking "Why was it a communication problem?". As the

students vocalize possible reasons, it is the responsibility of the instructor to record each of these responses. Again, "when the board is used to develop an organized analysis of the discussion, students will see how much they have contributed to the discussion and begin to understand the role of discussion in developing new learning" (Silverman, Welty, Lyon, 1992b, 4).

Wait Time

An issue which needs to be considered is whether one is going to call on students to answer the questions or whether one is going to ask for volunteers. "The choice of volunteering versus calling is an important one for the mood of the class" (Silverman, Welty, Lyon, 1992b, 6). This decision may be dependent upon the size of the class and the objectives for the activity. If the instructor decides to call on volunteers, it is important to make the environment conducive to large numbers participating. For example, an instructor should use a seven second wait time after posing a question. These additional seconds will allow those students who need more time to form their thoughts to have an opportunity to do so as well as providing the instructor with time to observe the body language and/or facial expressions of the students in the class. A student who does not normally ask questions in class may straightened up in his or her chair or show some other type of expression which

suggests that he or she would like the opportunity to respond. If an unlikely student does respond in class, write the response up on the chalk board and refer to it at a later time. It's a simple positive reinforcement technique which may encourage him/her to respond again.

Time

It is very important for the instructor to give some thought to the amount of time he or she wants to spend on specific aspects of the case (e.g., identification of issues, possible solutions, etc.). Once these time lines have been estimated, the instructor needs to follow the time lines fairly close. A clock placed on the front table can be a great asset for an instructor if it has a large enough dial to see at a glance so that one does not have to continuously check his or her wristwatch (Silverman, Welty, Lyon, 1992b). We have found that less than sixty minutes to teach a case is very difficult.

How to Use the Case Study Approach

Again, one of the strengths of the case study approach is for students to generate their own analysis and solutions to the problem. The instructor's role in this process is to guide them through the decision-making process by asking questions and providing bridging statements so that the students see how all of the "parts fit into the puzzle". It is important that the instructor not tell the students how to

solve the situation and not inform the students how he or she would handle the situation. In fact, it may be necessary to constantly remind the students that there are many possible answers to the dilemma and you are interested in their solutions.

Indicators of Success

Although, at this time, we do not have any empirical data to support the use of case study methodology, we have observed several indicators of success in our classes. First, we have observed an increase in student participation and noise level while teaching a case. In fact, at times it has been necessary to close the door so that the noise level is maintained within the classroom and not into the hallway. Second, students will revisit a case later in the semester when covering other topics. And third, we believe the case study approach has increased our student's ability to translate the case into effective decision making in the real world.

Summary

Case study teaching methodology requires the students to be active-participants in the learning process by asking important questions, considering various responses and in seeking more than one possible answer to a problem (Silverman, Welty, Lyon, 1992b). The role of the instructor is to be a facilitator by asking questions, listening and

responding to the students' answers.

The case method teaching as a possible teaching alternative in the classroom setting which encourages students to bridge the gap between theory and practice. It is hoped that after discussing the important elements and the role of the instructor in this type of methodology that the reader has a better understanding of the case study approach and may actually use the case and accompanying question outline provided in the article as an activity in class.

Appendix A

The Chair

The Chair

It was a warm spring day and the walk from the gymnasium to the playing fields was filled with the sounds of seventh graders catching up on the events of the day. As usual, Ms. Allen followed the group to the field, a few of the students stopped to talk her about this and that and then hurried off to finish conversations with their friends before the physical education classes started. Ms. Allen smiled to herself thinking that she was nearing the completion of her first year of teaching at the Clearwater Middle School. All in all it had been a good experience for her, she enjoyed the middle school students even with their mood swings and evolving personalities. She remembered the statement that Principal Jones had made during her interview "... if you teach physical education at this school, you will be the only one." That statement seemed a little odd at first, after all there were three other physical education teachers at Clearwater Middle School. The realization of the principal's statement hit home about a week and a half into classes when Ms. Allen's students had started dressing out and everyone elses students were still receiving locker assignments.

When Ms. Allen arrived at the field she noticed that her students were gathered around a certain spot and seemed to be watching something. As she approached her class, she observed that two students, Tom and Jerry, were dismantling

Coach Bowen's chair. The boys were so intent on their task, they failed to notice Ms. Allen's approach. When she was about twenty feet away from them, Tom looked up and saw her standing there. The back of the chair or what was left of the back of the chair dropped from his hand and he sought the protection of the group as he backed away from the chair. But it was too late as both boy realized that Ms. Allen had witnessed the deed. Tom and Jerry were best friends and one rarely saw one without the other. Up to this point, Ms. Allen had little or no problem with either boy. For the most part, the boys were relatively well-behaved and seemed to enjoy physical education. Tom's father was on the school board and was extremely critical regarding school policy especially those issues related to school discipline. Further, both of Tom's parents were always present at the PTO meetings and appeared to be genuinely interest in their son's schooling. In contrast, Ms. Allen had not had any contact with Jerry's parents as both were professionals in the community and rarely attended school functions. As the rest of the class got into their squads Ms. Allen called the boys over for a quick conversation. In a serious tone, she informed them that she would talk to them after class about this incident. The boys returned to their places and the class started leaving Ms. Allen to decide what to do about their behavior.

The chair was occupied most of the time by Coach Bowen. The coach was about 50 pound overweight and his assignment included Athletic Director as well as chair of the Department of Physical Education. He was also Ms. Allen's immediate supervisor and she knew that he would very disgruntled over the chair's condition. On the other hand, it would be interesting to see how the coach would conduct his class without benefit of the chair. But on a more serious note, would this incident lead her colleagues to believe that she had lost control of her class? And what effect would this incident have on the behavior of her students in the future? If she contacted Tom's father, would he give her a hard time about the incident? Would she even be able to reach Jerry's parents? She had to seek a solution that was fair, yet send the message that this type of behavior was clearly unacceptable.

But what should Ms. Allen do? What would you do?

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Note. Case used by permission of JOPERD. Granted - 3/5/93

Boyce, B.A. (1992). Making the case for the case study approach in physical education pedagogy classes. JOPERD, 63(6), 17-20.

Appendix B

Question Outline

Question Outline.

1. What do you do about the behavior problem?
2. Would you call the parents? Will Tom's father give you grief? Will you be able to reach Jerry's parents?
3. teacher socialization, pressure from other pe teachers regarding teaching vs. rolling out the ball
4. what if boys were the worst kids in the class, would you react the same way
5. What do you tell the coach? he is your immediate supervisor
6. should pe teachers teach from a sitting position; what message does that send about pe and physical educators
7. empowerment, what if Coach Bowen had not been your immediate supervisor
8. teacher as a role model (e.g., overweight teacher)

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